

*Nightshades, The Paradoxical Plants*, by CHARLES B. HEISER, JR., 200 pp. W. H. Freeman and Company, San Francisco. 1969. \$5.95.

Charles Heiser has written an entertaining and informative book about those members of the Nightshade Family (Solonaceae) that have been important in human history. The orientation of the book is neither too technical for the layman nor too popular for the professional biologist.

The prologue, written in Heiser's very personal style, sets the tone for the entire volume. In it he briefly sketches the pertinent information about the taxonomy, morphology, and cytology of the Solonaceae. Although the organization of a few of the chapters suggests that there was some difficulty in integrating material from diverse sources, the accounts of the various species make for enjoyable reading. One chapter ("Some Like It Hot") discusses the uses and economic history of the chili pepper, *Capsicum*, while another chapter ("Love Apples") chronicles the tomato in European culture. Among the other nightshades discussed in the book are those of medicinal, horticultural, magical and narcotic value. The most interesting chapter, however, describes the controversy between Luther Burbank and *The Rural New Yorker* concerning Burbank's "Wonderberry." *The Rural New Yorker* claimed Burbank's creation was a fraud. They believed "Wonderberry" to be nothing more than the common nightshade *Solanum nigrum*, rather than a hybrid between *S. guineense* and *S. villosum*. Heiser's own investigation into the matter provides a satisfying conclusion to the chapter.

One would hope that more books in this vain and of this quality will soon appear. *Nightshades, The Paradoxical Plants*, will make an important addition to any botanical library.—DENNIS R. PARNELL, Department of Biological Science, California State College, Hayward.

*Flowers of the Point Reyes National Seashore*. By ROXANA S. FERRIS. xi + 119 pp., illustrated. University of California Press, Berkeley. 1970. \$2.65, paper, \$7.95 cloth.

The majority of books about the plants of different areas fall into one of two categories: 1, they are intensely technical and hence difficult for the interested amateur, or 2, they are too sketchy, too abbreviated and hence satisfy no one, neither the amateur nor the professional. This very nice book about the plants of the Point Reyes National Seashore in Marin County, California, strikes a good balance between the two extremes. The text is accurate, interesting to read, and is accompanied by nearly 200 line drawings by Jeanne R. Janish. Keys are not used, but the plants are grouped by flower color. The introductory material contains a map of the Point Reyes area, some 53,000 acres, and a description of the plant associations found within the Seashore. An index of both botanical and popular names is included as well as a bibliography.

We should have many more books like this for different areas so that the public can gain a better understanding of the world around us.—JOHN H. THOMAS, Department of Biological Sciences, Stanford University.